

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY EA/RA-JFRIEDMAN:CD
APPROVED BY EA/RA - HERBERT HOROWITZ
EA:RBOAKLEY
HA/ORM:SCLOWMAN

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R 211445Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS
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SUBJECT:DISCUSSION OF INDOCHINA REFUGEES AT AUGUST 15
SESSION OF WOLFF SUBCOMMITTEE OF HIRC

1. HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE'S SUB-COMMITTEE
ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS HELD HEARING ON INDOCHINESE
REFUGEE POLICY AUGUST 15. PREPARED TESTIMONY GIVEN BY EA
DAS OAKLEY AS WELL AS BY AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
PRESIDENT ALBERT SHANKER AND PHILIP HOLMAN, OFFICE OF
SPECIAL PROGRAMS, SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, HEW.
HA/ORM DIRECTOR LOWMAN PROVIDED ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY.
HEARING CHAIRED BY REP. WOLFF; AND REP SOLARZ, THOUGH NOT
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A MEMBER OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE, TOOK ACTIVE PART. HOUSE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE GENERAL COUNSEL CLINE ALSO SAT IN.
PREPARED TESTIMONY SERVED MAINLY TO PROVIDE UPDATE SINCE
LAST SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON SUBJECT IN MAY, WITH SPECIAL
EMPHASIS ON INCREASE IN BOAT CASES, SITUATION OF CAMBODIAN
REFUGEES, PROGRESS MADE IN DEALING WITH REFUGEE PROBLEMS,
AND STATE OF RESETTLEMENT EFFORTS IN U.S. QUESTIONS AND

INTERJECTIONS WERE FREQUENT, AND FOLLOWING IS FYI SUMMARY OF NOTEWORTHY PORTIONS.

2. SHANKER MADE ELOQUENT DESCRIPTION OF RECENT VISIT TO REFUGEE CAMPS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND IMPORTANCE OF SPECIAL PAROLE FOR CAMBODIAN REFUGEES ARISING FROM GRIM HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CAMBODIA. IN HIS COMMENTS AFTERWARD, HE OPINED THAT KNOWLEDGE OF RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES WOULD NOT INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF INDOCHINESE ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE, FOR THERE ALREADY WAS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT MOTIVATION FOR ESCAPE PROVIDED BY THE INTERNAL CONDITIONS OF THE INDOCHINA STATES. IN ANSWER TO ANOTHER QUESTION, SHANKER CONFIRMED THAT U.S. ORGANIZED LABOR WAS STRONGLY BEHIND THE U.S. POLICY OF RESETTLING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES DESPITE POSSIBLE JOB COMPETITION. AFL-CIO IS UNITED ON THIS ISSUE. HE MADE POINT THAT, WHILE NUMBERS OF INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES ADMITTED INTO U.S. FOR RESETTLEMENT WERE OF TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE TO SOLUTION OF PROBLEM, THESE NUMBERS WERE VERY SMALL PROPORTION OF OUR TOTAL ANNUAL IMMIGRATION FIGURE. HE CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT, HAD HE CARTE BLANCHE TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM, HIS FIRST PRIORITY WOULD BE NOT MONEY OR LEGISLATION PER SE BUT INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES OF RESETTLEMENT ON A CONTINUING AND LONG-TERM BASIS THAT WOULD REASSURE COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM THAT THEIR BURDENS WOULD BE EASED AND THUS SERVE TO MAINTAIN THEIR RECEPTIVENESS TO REFUGEES. HE DECLINED TO STATE A

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FIGURE FOR ANY ANNUAL NUMBER TO BE TAKEN BY THE U.S.

3. THE PROBLEMS OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES AROSE IN SEVERAL CONTEXTS. REP. SOLARZ STATED THAT SENATOR DOLE'S PROPOSAL FOR PAROLE FOR CAMBODIAN REFUGEES MAY BE ADDRESSED INDIRECTLY BY THE HOUSE ON A TECHNICAL POINT WITH THE OBJECT OF CONVEYING TO THE ADMINISTRATION AN OFFICIAL SENSE OF THE CONGRESS THAT AN ADDITIONAL 15,000 PAROLES FOR CAMBODIAN REFUGEES SHOULD BE AUTHORIZED OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS ON THE BASIS THAT THESE REFUGEES HAVE FLED EXCEPTIONALLY TERRIBLE CONDITIONS. IT WAS POINTED OUT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT MANY WHO HAD FLED HAD DONE SO AFTER MOST OF THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS HAD BEEN MURDERED. IF BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS CONCURRED IN THE SENSE OF THE DOLE AMENDMENT, IT WAS ASKED, WOULD THE ATTORNEY GENERAL USE HIS PAROLE POWERS TO ADMIT 15,000 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES? LOWMAN ANSWERED THAT THIS WAS A DECISION FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL BUT THAT STATE WOULD CONSULT WITH JUSTICE AND THE WHITE HOUSE AND MAKE A RECOMMENDATION. AT PRESENT STATE HAS NO POSITION. REP. SOLARZ URGED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FLIGHT FROM OPPRESSION AND FLIGHT FROM MASS MURDER.

4. MR. LOWMAN DESCRIBED HOW THE MAJOR PAROLE PROGRAMS TO DATE HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO DEAL WITH "TIME-URGENT/ PROBLEMS THAT DIRECTED FIRST PRIORITY TO REFUGEES FROM LAOS IN THAI CAMPS WHO IN LAST NOVEMBER RISKED FORCIABLE REPATRIATION AND THEN TO BOAT REFUGEES BUILDING UP IN MALAYSIAN CAMPS

WHO RISKED BEING SHOVED BACK TO SEA. CAMBODIAN REFUGEES, HE ADDED, ALSO TENDED TO BE LESS ABLE THAN LAO OR VIETNAMESE REFUGEES TO MEET THE ADMISSION CRITERIA OF CLOSE U.S. CONNECTIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS, DESPITE ATTEMPTS AT LIBERALIZED INTERPRETATION.

5. SOLARZ ASKED IF THAI-CAMBODIANRAPPROACHMENTWOULD BE UNCLASSIFIED

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LIKELY TO RESULT IN FORCED REPATRIATION OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES NOW IN THAILAND, AND OAKLEY ANSWERED THAT HE THOUGHT THIS MOST UNLIKELY, THAT THE RTG WAS FOLLOWING THE POLICY OF PM KRIANGSAK AGAINST ANY FORCED REPATRIATION OR EXPULSION. REP. SOLARZ ENQUIRED WHETHER AMBASSADOR ABRAMOWITZ HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO WORK WITH THE RTG TO IMPROVE HANDLING OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES, AND OAKLEY RESPONDED THAT HE, AS HAD HIS PREDECESSORS, WOULD GIVE HIGHEST PRIORITY TO REFUGEE POLICY.

6. CHAIRMAN WOLFF ASKED IF THE U.S. HAD DISCUSSED INDOCHINESE REFUGEES WITH THE PRC, NOTING THAT THE EMERGENCE OF THE PRC AS A COUNTRY OF PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT HAD CREATED A DILEMMA FOR SOME ANTI-COMMUNIST REFUGEES. MR. OAKLEY STATED THAT THE U.S. HAD NOT DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT WITH THE PRC; FOR IT WAS A MATTER OF POLITICAL CONTENTION BETWEEN THE PRC AND THE SRV, AND WE DID NOT WANT TO GET CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE. CHAIRMAN WOLFF REMARKED THAT HE HAD RAISED THE SUBJECT DURING HIW OWN TALKS WITH THE PRC OFFICIALS BUT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO ELICIT A RESPONSE. REP. WOLFF ALSO ASKED ABOUT THE ATTITUDE OF THE ROC, AND MR. OAKLEY ANSWERED THAT WE HAD DISCUSSED THIS WITH THE GRC REPEATEDLY BUT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET MUCH SATISFACTION FROM THEM WITH RESPECT TO ADDITIONAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

7. THERE WERE A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS REGARDING OTHERS INVOLVED IN REFUGEE ASSISTANCE, AND PARTICULARLY AS TO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNHCR IN DEALING WITH THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE SITUATION. LOWMAN NOTED THAT THE NEW HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES HAD PROVED VIGOROUS AND WAS MAKING SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS AT SOLICITING MORE INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNHCR BUDGET; THE UNCLASSIFIED

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NEW HCR-WOULD MAKE HIS FIRST VISIT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA
IN SEPTEMBER.

8. CHAIRMAN WOLFF, NOTING THAT SOME INFORMATION ON
AMERICAN MIAS HAD COME FROM REFUGEES, ASKED IF REFUGEES
WERE SYSTEMATICALLY INTERROGATED FOR MIA INFORMATION.
IT WAS EXPLAINED THAT, UNTIL RECENTLY, WHILE ALL REPORTS
HAD BEEN FOLLOWED UP, REFUGEES HAD NOT BEEN QUESTIONED

DIRECTLY ABOUT MIAS DURING THE SCREENING PROCESS FOR FEAR
OF ENCOURAGING THEM TO MANUFACTURE OR EXAGGERATE SUCH
INFORMATION IN HOPES OF HELPING THEIR CHANCES FOR
ACCEPTANCE IN THE U.S. REFUGEE PROGRAM. WE ARE INITIATING
A NEW SYSTEM OF ASKING REFUGEES ALREADY ACCEPTED AND
IN TRANSIT CAMPS FOR INFORMATION ON MIAS, SINCE THESE
REFUGEES WOULD NOT HAVE THE SAME INCENTIVE TO MANUFACTURE
REPORTS ON MIAS. REP. WOLFF DECLARED THAT THIS SHOULD
HAVE BEEN DONE LONG AGO BUT EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT
IT WAS BEING DONE NOW.

9. IN DISCUSSION OF PROGRESS ON AMENDMENT OF THE
IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT TO ADMIT AN ANNUAL INFLOW
OF REFUGEES, MR. CLINE STATED THAT THE HOUSE JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE WAS WELL AWARE OF THE INDOCHINA REFUGEE PROBLEM
AND INTENDED TO TAKE ACTION AT THE FIRST FEASIBLE
OPPORTUNITY AFTER THE NEW CONGRESS CONVENES. HE ADDED
THAT THE THOUGHT THAT THERE SHOULD BE MORE COORDINATED
ACTION AND FORWARD PLANNING BETWEEN STATE, JUSTICE, AND
HEW.

10. THE SUBJECT OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
INDOCHINESE REFUGEES AROSE IN SEVERAL CONTEXTS, INCLUDING
INITIAL SUPPORT FROM SHANKER. THE WITNESSES COMMENTED ON
THE STATE OF DISCUSSIONS ON A POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE, AND LOWMAN NOTED THAT EVERY COUNTRY INVOLVED
WOULD FAVOR SUCH A CONFERENCE IF THERE WAS A REASONABLE
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LIKELIHOOD THAT IT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL; BUT ALL RESPONSIBLE
PARTIES HAVE FEARED THE CONSEQUENCES OF A CONFERENCE THAT
WOULD PUBLICIZE THE PROBLEM WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO PRODUCE
ANY MEANS OF DEALING MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH IT. CHRISTOPHER

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